

the picture of what every son may attain, who lives in the complete conviction that his life cannot be shut in by arbitrary lines, but that the way is everywhere open to him because he is a member of the same family, a child of God's household. Thus the younger brother may see in the older brother the picture of his own nature and his own rights. "I have," he says, "his nature, his rights and privileges. I may be the same kind of a man that he is. I may follow in the same path, even tho it is not given me to achieve the same degree of rank and honor."

Just so in the human family of God. Paul and I are brothers. But, because he wrote an Epistle to the Hebrews, shall I suppose that I can reason and write upon those sublime mysteries? There are certain qualities peculiar to Paul which constitute his manhood; but not one of us can read the story of his life without feeling ourselves grander and holier for it.

So always try and believe about the noblest of your race, the men or women in your own circle whom you know to be beyond yourselves in attainment, who possess something personal which you can never represent, that, so far as they show out humanity, the luster and completeness of human nature you may get new courage and faith in yourselves from what you see them do.

III. It is, above all, in spiritual things that man has a right to claim the privileges of the family or household. Spiritual powers are the most complete step of our human nature. Religious nature is very different in all of us; but it is in all of us. The different forms of its utterance are apt to bewilder. We are apt to settle on certain forms, and, because we do not find them everywhere, we think it cannot be that the relation of the child's soul to the father's soul constitutes religion. We may appeal to man's consciousness for this. Here, James says, is a man in the attitude of prayer; no matter if separated from us by centuries, and no matter if immensely stronger in faith—nevertheless, he is "a man subject to like passions," and to his prayer there comes the answer. He prayed for certain things—rain, food; no matter what it was—he wanted something he could not get out of himself, or out of his own nature; but he had a right to pray as the Father had told him, and because of his needy human nature, and because of his sacred rights as a child of God. This is the reason why he prayed. This is the reason why St. James points back to that solitary figure, bowed in prayer, on Mt. Carmel; not because it is the prophet Elias, but because it is a man praying in virtue of those needs and privileges which belong to our race. Here is a man who says: "I cannot pray; I am too far from God; I am too worldly," etc. Are you not needy, and his child? Is not your nature full of the wants he has taught it to feel, and are not your rights as the rights of a child to its father? Oh! if I could bring this truth home to some one of the many earnest people sitting here before

me! Some one thing you want; it may be a better life, greater love to God, the rain and dew of his grace, perhaps, for yourself and friends. Why are you not praying? Your need and your nature as a child of God are all the credentials you want; take these, cast yourselves down beside Elias, and David, and the praying Jesus; for they were all men of like passions with you, and the grace they needed shall be given you as it was given unto them. And may God grant it for you all!

## Christian Life

### The Web of Life

LILLIAS C. NEVIN

Full soon the web of life is spun—  
The thread is snapped; the work is done:  
And rising from the whirring loom,  
We pass within the larger room  
From out the weary din of life,  
To where peace overcometh strife;  
And in the Master's presence sweet  
Lay down our little tasks complete.

But still we'll note with throbs of pain  
Where tangled threads made effort vain,  
Rememb'ring how grief's heavy seal  
Was set, our errors to reveal;  
And sadly own, thru tear-filled eyes,  
That careless hands could ne'er devise  
A plan to guide the shuttle right,  
Upon life's loom from morn till night.

So when, the weaver's heart to cheer,  
The Master-Workman draweth near  
With words of counsel to advise,  
And patient fingers, skillful, wise,  
He draws the tangled threads apart,  
And lays them straight and smooth athwart  
The bar—then listens, that a call  
For help may ne'er unheeded fall.

But when the web at length is spun,  
The thread snapped off; the work all done;  
The weaver bears it from the loom,  
Where in the sunlit larger room  
The Master sits, all tasks to scan  
And judge the workers man by man  
Full joy 'twill be if we but hear  
The Lord's "Well done," fall sweet and clear.

—New York Observer.

### HOW THE CHURCH HELPS US

J. R. MILLER

We are told that it is our duty to unite with the church. Christ requires of his followers that they confess him before men. We can scarcely do this in a satisfactory way without identifying ourselves with the company of Christ's friends. There is no word in our Lord's teaching which commends secret discipleship. The few friends of Jesus' own who at first did not come out openly on his side, were constrained in the end to make a bold confession before the world. It seems very clear that all who accept Christ as their Savior owe it to their new Master to take their place at once in the church.

But apart from the duty of thus confessing Christ, there is immeasurable help for the Christian in the church, if he puts himself in right relations to it. It is this devotional side of church life that we are now considering. What is the church meant to do for

our spiritual life? And how may we get from it the help it has for us?

The ordinances of religion are only "means of grace." That is, they are channels thru which grace flows into the life of those who enjoy them. All grace comes from Christ. There is no blessing in the ordinances themselves. One's thirst cannot be quenched merely by the pipes which are adjusted to bring the water from the fountain. These may be pipes of gold, but they have nothing to give to those who put their lips to them unless they are attached to the fountain and filled from it. In like manner the most beautiful church services have nothing in themselves to bless us, save as they bring Christ into our life. There is no grace in the mere act of praying, however fitting the words of the petition may be; it is only as we actually draw nigh to God, coming into living fellowship with him, that we get help in praying. There is nothing uplifting or inspiring in a hymn, however noble its sentiments and however musically it may be rendered, save as it kindles love, homage, and faith in our hearts, and its words bear our soul, as on wings, nearer to Christ. Even in the Lord's Supper, the most sacred of all the ordinances of the church, there is no efficacy except as we are brought by it into closer relation with Christ himself.

It is important, therefore, that we keep ever in mind the precise intention of the services of the church, that they are only channels thru which we may receive the good things which Christ wishes to give to us. In heaven, where they see him face to face, the worshipers do not need forms of devotion. But while we are in this world we are saved only by hope, and need ordinances and forms of worship to bridge over the chasm between flesh and spirit. But we must guard against dependence upon the forms and use them only as means of communication between our spirit and the divine Spirit.

What are some phases of the help we may get from the church? One is instruction. The church is a school. We are not full grown Christians when we accept Christ—we are only beginners, with everything yet to learn. Jesus says, "Come unto me . . . and learn of me." The course of instruction is long and the lessons are many. The learning is not merely intellectual—it is not enough to know what a Christian life should be, what qualities go to make up Christlikeness. We are to learn to live the things which are beautiful. We are not merely to know what patience, unselfishness, thoughtfulness, and kindness, are, but we are to get these qualities into our own disposition and character. In the church we have the lessons set for us; then we are to go out and learn them, practicing them until they have become part of our new life.

Another phase of the help which the church has for us is the renewal of strength. Life in the world exhausts us. Its struggles, its tasks, its cares, its frets, its disappointments, drain our spiritual resources. We need to